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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that the role of teacher language in instructional effectiveness be included in teacher training as part of language across the curriculum. Of the three aspects of "teacher-talk" identified (physiological, interpersonal, and pedagogical), the pedagogical aspect is highlighted as the basis for a model of teacher-talk instruction in a teacher education program. The model is derived from the literature on classroom interaction, as well as from original research and classroom experience. The objective of the instruction is to enable teachers to solve classroom communication problems through application of the communication model in role-playing exercises on specific types of interaction and question-answering. Three functional modes are identified (interactive, operative, and informative), and the teaching functions or acts typically associated with each phase of each mode are discussed. Sample exercises are given to illustrate how communication tasks focus attention on the performance of these teaching acts, and teachers are encouraged to consider how their utterances can contribute to the achievement of curricular objectives. (MSE)

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Teacher Education and Teacher-talk

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The paper presents a model of Teacher-talk as a part of the curricular process (Figure I) and considers the role of this aspect of language across the curriculum in teacher-training programmes. No attempt is made to cover the language of text-books and other written materials, nor have we discussed the nature and role of pupil language, though it might be argued that this is at least as important as teacher-talk itself. The three major aspects of Teacher-talk are identified as Physiological, Interpersonal and Pedagogical. The primary emphasis in this paper, as in our teacher-training programme, is upon the latter.

(Insert figure 1: Model of Teacher-talk)

I. THE PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECT

Despite advances in technology and current trends in educational theory, the teacher's voice is likely to remain a major educational resource. It is necessary for teachers to speak loudly and clearly enough to be understood by large numbers of pupils in often noisy environments and to produce their voices in such a way as to avoid physical and psychological strain. The teacher's voice should ideally be as rich and as varied an instrument as an actor's, but it rarely is, and teacher-training programmes seldom offer much assistance in this area.

The Physiological Aspect of Teacher-talk used to receive more attention than it now does and some reasons accounting for its

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comparative neglect seem to be the following:

a. Elocution, however erroneously, has been associated with the acquisition of a 'superior' accent, and tends therefore to be regarded as an anachronism in a world in which regional accents and indeed varieties of English have gained considerable acceptance.

b. Interest has shifted away from articulatory to acoustic and auditory phonetics, and within linguistics as a whole, to a broader interest in phonology, syntax, discourse structure and semantics. Only speech therapists appear to retain a strong interest in this area.

c. In teacher education, there has also been a shift in emphasis, i.e. from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching approaches. There is a new emphasis on learner autonomy, individualized instruction, group work, pair work etc. and the teacher's role is viewed as that of manager of teaching resources in the classroom. In this pedagogical climate, focussing upon the teacher's voice seems almost reprehensible.

This decline in interest in voice control and production must be regretted, however laudable the motives which prompted it. There is evidence from Hong Kong and elsewhere that many teachers suffer from vocal strain, that this affects their teaching and their general health and that they would welcome assistance (Cameron 1983). However, little or nothing is attempted in this area in teacher-training programmes that we are aware of, including our own.

II. THE INTERPERSONAL ASPECT

The Interpersonal Aspect is the second major component in our model of Teacher-talk. Under this heading, we include classroom management and socialization, i.e. the establishment in the classroom of an environment in which learning is stimulated, encouraged and effective. This involves

defining the behaviours the teacher considers appropriate under a variety of circumstances between teacher and pupil and amongst the pupils themselves.

Despite the importance which educational theory assigns to this aspect of teaching and learning, it remains largely undeveloped in our model. Everyone agrees that a 'good' classroom climate is a prerequisite for successful learning. It is far more difficult to obtain agreement upon a definition, or upon the means for achieving it. It seems highly probable that it is pupils' perceptions of the teacher's intentions which determine the outcome, and these may be at variance with the teacher's actual words.

Certainly it would be simplistic and indeed irresponsible to suggest that such attributes of the 'good' teacher as 'caring about your pupils' could be reduced to interpersonal acts performed by means of appropriate linguistic realisations.

Nevertheless it is necessary, indeed vital, that student-teachers should consider the implications for interpersonal relationships of the linguistic decisions that they make. Far too often teachers' actual words belie their expressed intentions, or those intentions are not recognised by pupils because they are never given explicit realisation. This is particularly important in a second language classroom where the interpersonal implications of stress, rhythm and intonation may carry little meaning, even for the advanced learner, and where teachers may themselves be limited in the extent to which they can express themselves affectively in their second language.

III. THE PEDAGOGICAL ASPECT

The most fully developed component of our model is the Pedagogical Aspect. It is here that the relationship between intention and

linguistic realisation is most transparent. The model has been derived partly from the literature on classroom interaction (in particular the work of Barnes, Bellack et al, Coulthard, Sinclair and Stubbs), partly from our research into teacher-talk taped in the classroom (Johnson 1983a and b) or videotaped in micro-teaching sessions (Johnson and Shek, 1984), and partly from experience in running our own teacher-training programme. The functional analysis of the Pedagogical Aspect is presented below and illustrated with some exercises. First however, it may be useful to show the stages by which the various units and exercises in our programme are derived from the model and then applied in the teaching programme.

1. Development
   a) Particular teaching acts are identified from the models of the modes of Teacher-talk (see Figures 2, 3 and 4 below).
   b) Communication tasks are developed which depend crucially for their success upon effective performance of those teaching acts.
2. Practice
   a) Student-teachers perform the communication tasks.
   b) Student-teachers evaluate their performances in the communication tasks.
3. Application
   a) Student-teachers identify general principles governing effective completion of such tasks.
   b) Student-teachers apply those principles to their own teaching subjects.

Our approach is structured but not prescriptive. Given differences of personality and situation, it would be wrong to maintain that there is only one solution to any classroom problem, or indeed only one way in

which a classroom situation may be interpreted. The following example will serve to illustrate this:

1. Teacher: Do the exercise on page 19 in your course book.
2. Pupil: Sir, we did it last year.
3. Teacher: And you failed last year. Do as you're told.

In this exercise, there is a series of taped exchanges between teachers and pupils involving a command from the teacher, an intervention from the pupil and the teacher's response. Student-teachers evaluate each teacher's performance. They define the situation as they imagine it and consider the teacher's actual utterance to decide whether it would have achieved its communicative goal. If they consider the teacher's response to be inadequate, which typically in these exercises it is, they formulate and discuss alternative responses.

Later, student-teachers role-play comparable situations where (1) and (2) (see above) are given and they must improvise the response (3). Again the evaluation consists of discussion in which student-teachers compare their interpretations of the situation and decide whether the teacher's response in (3) would have been appropriate and communicatively effective. They also consider what alternative utterances might have been more effective.

A similar situation arises in the discussion of the ways in which teachers handle pupil responses to questions. As well as considering the Pedagogical Aspect, in ways to be discussed below, student-teachers consider the interpersonal implication of the response; for example, given a certain way of handling a pupil's response, would the pupil be more or less willing to answer questions in the future? Again evaluation of what the teacher actually says forms the important part of the discussion. If it is considered to be inappropriate and/or communicatively ineffective, student-teachers will think of alternative

utterances. In so doing, it is hoped that student-teachers will become more aware of the importance of their classroom language and the crucial role that it plays in the curriculum. Knowing what to do is one thing; succeeding in doing it depends upon effective use of the linguistic medium.

Within the Pedagogical Aspect of Teacher-talk, we identify three functional modes: Interactive, Operative and Informative, and a part of our programme is devoted to each. Each of the modes is represented by a tree-diagram showing teaching functions or acts typically associated with each phase of each mode. Sample exercises are given to show how communication tasks focus attention upon the performance of these teaching acts.

III.1 The Interactive Mode

(Insert Figure 2: Teaching Functions in the Interactive Mode)

An Interactive Transaction is marked by an elicitation, which is the teacher's attempt to elicit information from one or more pupils and which usually takes the form of a question. The Elicitation and the Reply, if any, divide the transaction into three phases. The first is the Framing Phase. In this phase, the teacher prepares his pupils for the elicitation. The illustrative teaching functions include marking boundaries between transactions and phases ('O.K.', 'Well', etc.), focussing (directing pupils' attention to a topic area and establishing communicative intentions), structuring (organising the interaction) and nominating (calling upon a pupil or pupils to answer).

After the elicitation, if there is no reply, the teacher may enter the Mediating Phase. The teaching functions here are checking (checking

if the elicitation is understood), prompting (urging a reply by saying 'come on', 'hurry up', etc.), clueing (providing additional information to help pupils give a reply), repeating or rephrasing the elicitation and nominating. If pupils do not volunteer an answer, elicitations are normally followed by a nomination.

When a reply is obtained, the teacher enters the Evaluating Phase. In this phase the teacher deals with the reply obtained, performing one or more teaching acts such as checking (establishing whether the reply is intended by the pupil or understood by other pupils), repeating (repeating the reply), assessing (evaluating the accuracy/adequacy of the reply), commenting (expanding upon the reply) and establishing continuity (establishing the relationship with the next transaction).

The teaching functions within a phase are unordered and potentially recursive, i.e. the teacher may prompt repeatedly, or having rephrased a question, prompt again or provide further clues.

A transaction terminates when the teacher switches to another mode or to an elicitation on a new topic.

In the following example, one of a number of similar exchanges, the teacher is trying to elicit the names of the three major road tunnels in Hong Kong, i.e. Aberdeen Tunnel, Lion Rock Tunnel and Cross Harbour Tunnel.

Teacher: What goes through the hill and under the water?

Pupil: (Silence)

Teacher: Wake up!

Pupil: (Silence)

Teacher: How many tunnels are there in Hong Kong?

Pupil: Hundreds, sir!

Teacher: Ah! But I mean really big tunnels.

Pupil: Do you mean the MTR, sir?

Teacher: Don't be silly, I mean tunnels or proper tunnels. The MTR is a railway. Try to think more clearly.

After listening to each exchange, student-teachers in pairs proceed as follows:

1. Identify the phases and teaching functions in the interactive transaction, and discuss the effectiveness of each utterance in terms of its intention.
2. Play the roles of teacher and pupil, i.e. in this case the teacher elicits from the pupil the names of the three major road tunnels in Hong Kong.
3. Listen to the playback of the role-play and discuss the effectiveness of the teacher's performance.
4. Identify general principles for application in the classroom.

III.2 The Operative Mode

(Insert Figure 3: Teaching Functions in the Operative Mode)

An Operative Transaction is marked by a directive. This usually takes the form of an order or an instruction. As in the Interactive Mode, an Operative Transaction is divided into the Framing Phase, the Mediating Phase and the Evaluating Phase. In this case the Framing Phase prepares pupils for the instruction(s), the Mediating Phase ensures understanding and the Evaluating Phase determines whether or not the required activity has been carried out successfully. The illustrative teaching functions are the same as those in the Interactive Mode.

Exercises require each student-teacher to prerecord a set of instructions, e.g. for the construction of patterns from marked cards,

for the layout of a town plan which the partner must re-assemble from 'cut-outs' or for understanding the code in which a message is written. In each case the partners attempt to carry out their tasks, evaluate the instructions and discuss how the instructions could have been made more effective. Again the purpose of the discussion is to arrive at general principles.

III.3 The Informative Mode

(Insert Figure 4: Teaching Functions in the Informative Mode)

Three phases are identified in the Informative Mode: the Framing Phase, the Informing Phase and the Consolidating Phase. The functions identified in Figure 4 are, in general, those traditionally associated with exposition.

Exercises involve student-teachers in preparing and recording extended monologues which have a reasonably complex information structure. As before, each student-teacher works with the prerecorded tape of his/her partner, noting what appear to be the main points, and answering questions regarding the stages of a process or the names and functions of the parts of a particular structure. Where important points were missed, or where questions could not be answered, student-teachers re-examine their presentations to determine what went wrong, and how the material could have been presented more effectively. Again the overriding aim is to arrive at general principles, governing in this case the effective presentation of new information.

IV. TEACHING ACTS AND CURRICULAR OBJECTIVES

Up to a point, our essentially non-prescriptive approach is effective in that it allows for differences of personality and teaching style. However, there are difficulties when student-teachers want to

know if they have 'got it right', whether in the narrowly linguistic or in the broader educational sense. The former can be dealt with, time permitting, but the latter is more complex. "It depends on your intentions" is in many cases an inadequate and unhelpful response. It is obviously necessary to establish some less indeterminate framework which will allow teacher-trainers and trainees to relate individual teaching acts to overall curricular aims.

One solution is to increase the size of the teaching and learning context within which particular utterances can be evaluated. Thus, student-teachers consider taped examples, or prepare their own tapes, of extended teacher-talk consisting of a complete stage within a lesson rather than a single transaction. For this type of exercise, an analysis of the content or the informational structure of the teacher-talk becomes as important as the functional analysis, and is in fact a prerequisite for effective functional analysis.

In the model of teacher-talk as part of the curricular process (Figure I), curricular objectives were summarized under the headings: knowledge, attitudes and skills. Any discussion of teacher-talk ought to take account in some way of these overriding objectives, but to achieve this, some framework needs to be established for relating individual utterances to those objectives. This is comparatively easy for the Interpersonal Aspect, interpersonal functions are typically realised at the level of utterance, but more difficult in dealing with the Pedagogical Aspect, where the propositional content of an utterance must be placed within the context of the discourse as a whole.

(Insert Figure 5: Framework for Content Analysis)

The content of a lesson normally involves one or more stages, each

of which may consist of a number of themes, topics and finally points of detail, i.e. individual utterances. Once the informational structure of a lesson, or lesson stage is clear, discussion of the propositonal content of specific utterances can obviously be more fruitful; in particular it is possible to discuss the ways in which the teacher might clarify the informational structure of the lesson, marking what is important and what is subsidiary; what is relevant and what is incidental; the point at which a new topic is introduced and the nature of its relationship to other topics, themes and stages of the lesson, and the effectiveness of the transition.

Such discussion might appear to relate primarily to the Informative Mode, but this is not, or should not be the case. The content analysis and the functional analysis are separate, and the distinction is important regardless of the particular pedagogical mode. The syllabus determines to a very large extent what must be taught, but the teacher determines the manner in which learning takes place, the skills that pupils will, or will not master, and the attitudes towards learning that will be formed. Thus a teacher may or may not choose to adopt the Informative Mode and to deliver a 'lecture' to the class. Thus at this level of analysis, it is possible to discuss whether the choice of the Informative Mode was appropriate, i.e. the same objective might be attained Socratically, through questions directed at the class (Interactive Mode); or through instructions (Operative Mode) to the class to obtain the information through reading, or discussion in pairs or in groups. Such alternatives might often be more effective than the Informative Mode itself.

In practice, it is not a question of a single choice, but of a network of interrelated choices within and across the various stages of a lesson. The aim of a particular section of a lesson may be to present

information but most teachers will avoid a lecturing style by ensuring that pupils are given activities and are involved in interaction, if only for variety and to keep them awake. In this way, one functional mode of teacher-talk may be embedded within another; and the structure of the lesson as a whole becomes a network of such choices. Each utterance may be evaluated in terms of the specific function it serves: to structure, or focus, present or elicit information, prompt, clue, rephrase etc.; or it may be analysed in terms of its place within the structure of the lesson as a whole. The two again must be seen as distinct. It is possible that the intention which prompted an utterance is valid, but the utterance fails (i.e. is unclear or ambiguous). It is also possible that an utterance performs its intended function perfectly, but the intention itself may be seen to be misconceived when considered in a broader context.

Consideration of the functional choices imposed by the teacher upon the content of the lesson brings us to that fascinating area which is often referred to as the 'hidden curriculum'. As was stated previously, pupils are not affected so much by what teachers believe, as by what they do, specifically in this case, by what they say. Much of teacher-education, despite its supposedly practical professional orientation, is highly abstract. Discussion is carried out at the level of principles and processes: authoritarian versus non-authoritarian teaching, teacher-centred versus pupil-centred classrooms, the democratic approach, the need to stimulate and motivate, to relate the syllabus to pupils' lives and interests etc. Yet in practice, the 'democratic' teacher does not necessarily consult pupils; pupils' initiatives may be dismissed or ignored; questions may be text-book related and all too often of a yes/no variety etc. This mismatch between principle and teaching performance can be addressed if student-teachers are required to relate the pedagogical

beliefs they profess to the linguistic means they employ.

In conclusion then, we believe that it is possible, and potentially extremely valuable to ask student-teachers to face up to the consequences of their speech acts in the classroom and to consider how particular utterances and those utterances in combination contribute to the achievement of their curricular aims.

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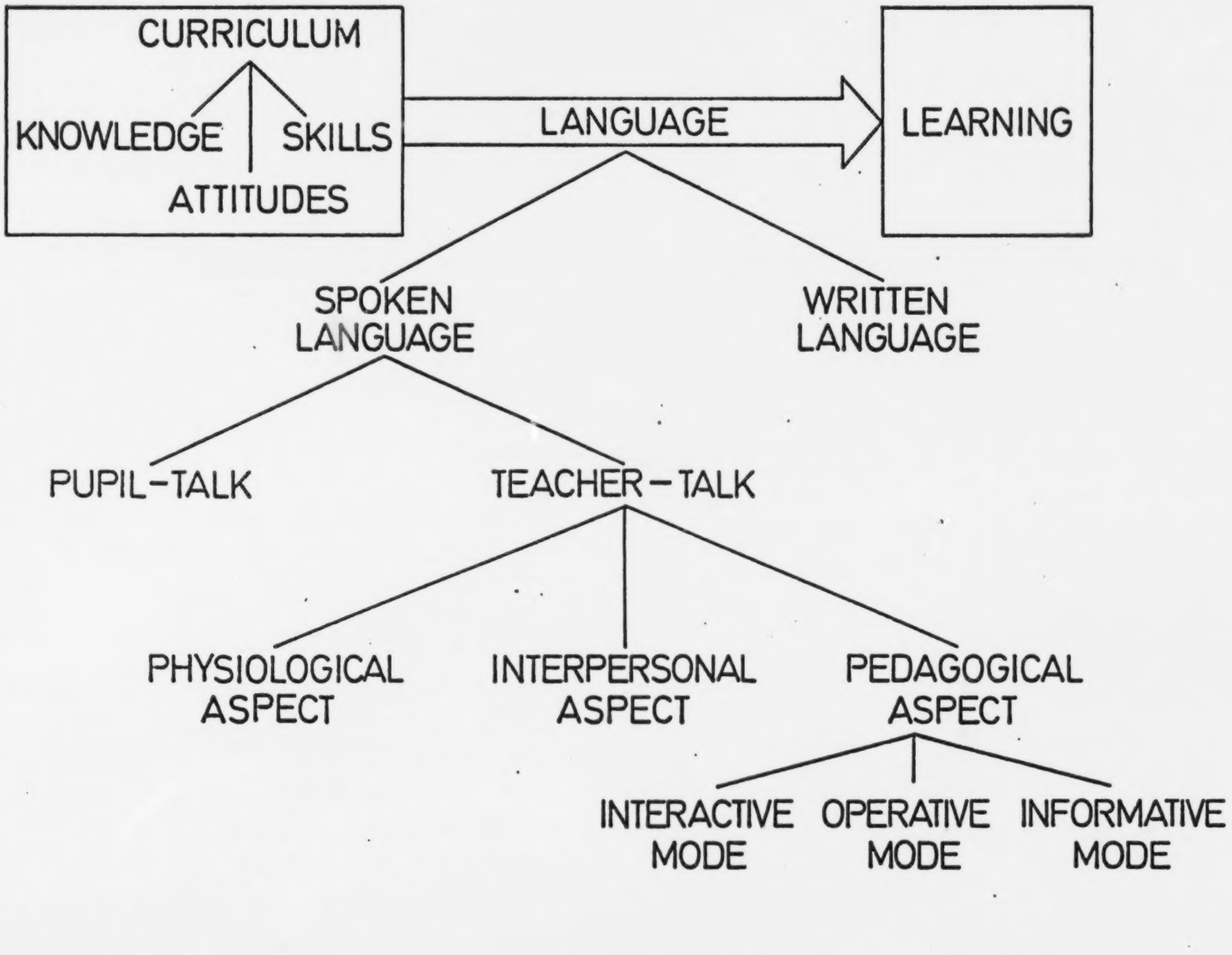

FIGURE 1: TEACHER-TALK IN THE CURRICULAR PROCESS

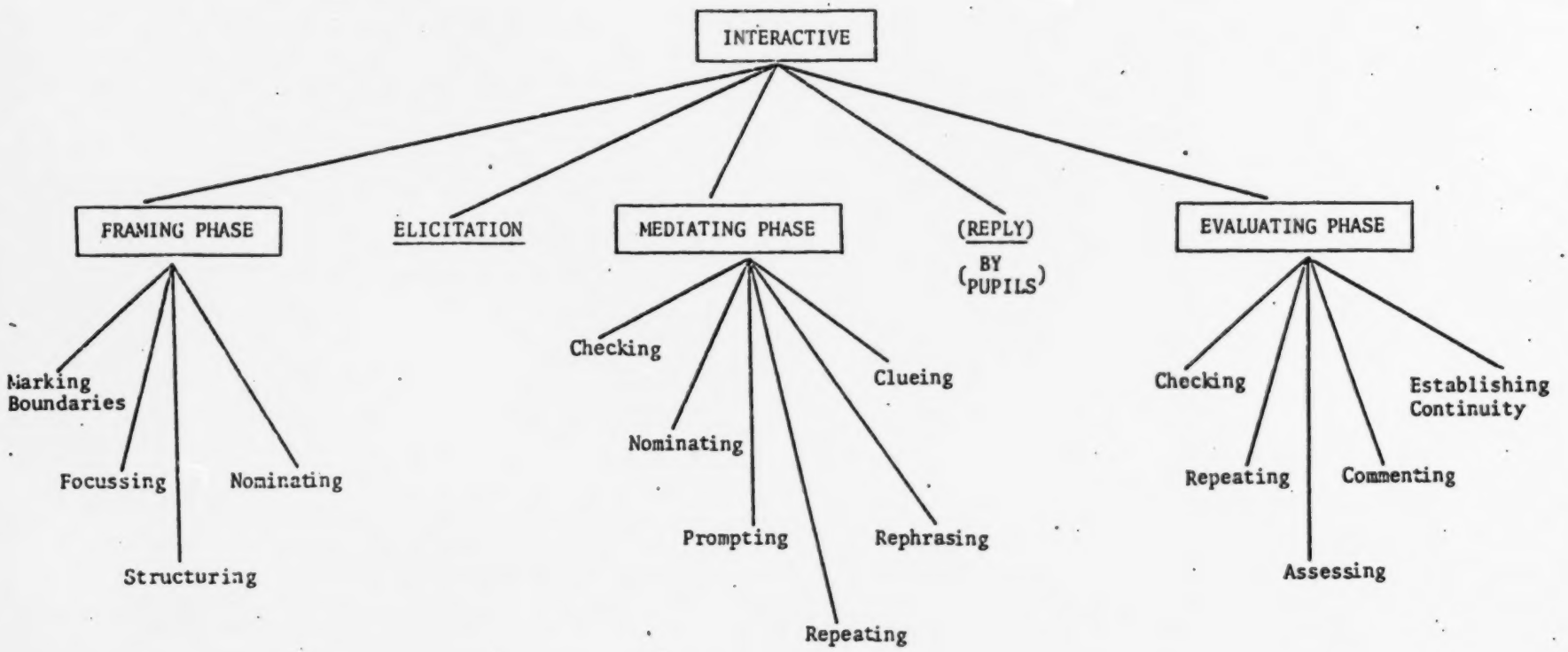

FIGURE 2: TEACHING FUNCTIONS IN THE INTERACTIVE MODE

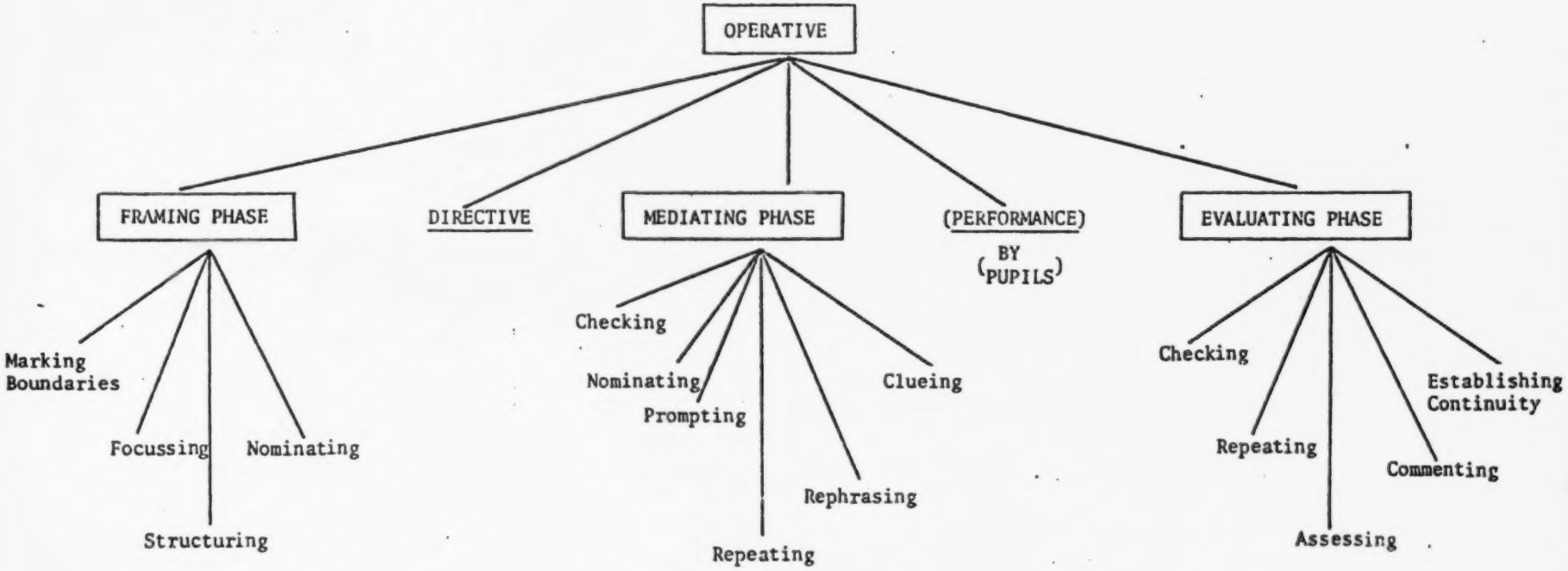

FIGURE 3: TEACHING FUNCTIONS IN THE OPERATIVE MODE

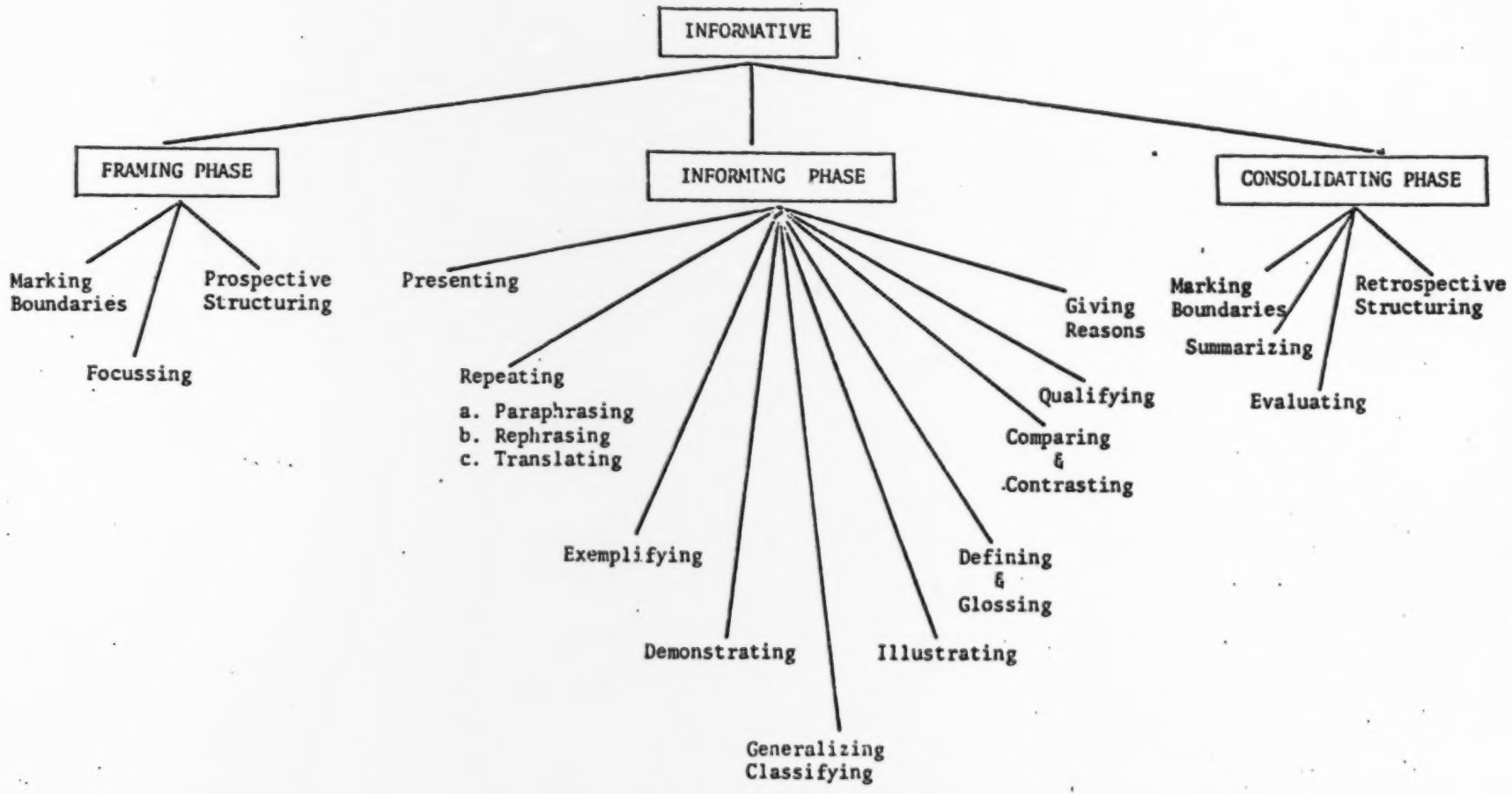

FIGURE 4: TEACHING FUNCTIONS IN THE INFORMATIVE MODE

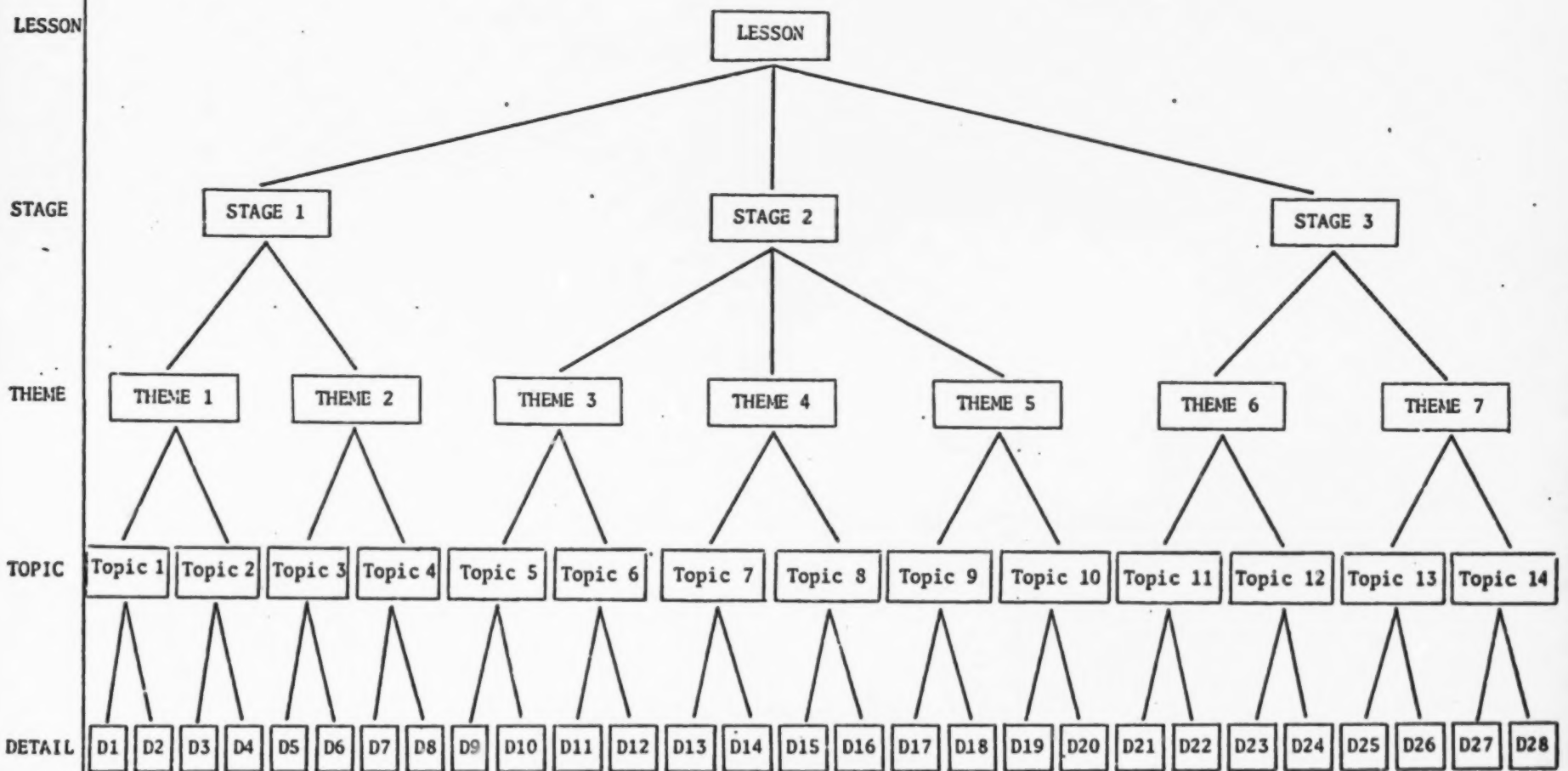

FIGURE 5: FRAMEWORK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS